

Country Journal

Devoted to the Needs of the Hilltowns

Becket, Blandford, Chester, Chesterfield, Cummington, Goshen, Huntington, Middlefield, Montgomery, Otis, Plainfield, Russell, Sandisfield, Westhampton, Williamsburg, Worthington

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GATEWAY

GRSC preps graduation

By Shelby Macri

The Gateway Regional School Committee is preparing to bid farewell to the Class of 2021 and four its committee members as the school year winds down.

Committee members expressed that they'd like to try to meet in person in June, partially to be able to say farewell to those leaving in person rather than over a screen. While the committee members would like to meet in person, they'll continue to abide by safety protocols put in place. "Usually when a person leaves school committee, we say goodbye to them during their last meeting," Committee Chair Michele Crane said. "This is typically a very casual thing, not a big fuss."

At the June 9 meeting the School Committee will be saying goodbye to Crane from Blandford, and members Sarah Foley from Middlefield, Madelyn Austin from Montgomery, and Melissa Nazzaro from Huntington. While Superintendent David Hopson is retiring for next school year, there will be more for him to address and be involved in, so he'll be with Gateway until the end of August during the first week of school.

The School Committee decided to hold an in-person meeting for June, and it will be held in the Gateway Performing Arts Center to allow appropriate social distancing rather than a classroom. Along with committee members saying goodbye to each other, seniors will be saying goodbye to their classmates as they prepare to graduate.

"Graduation, weather permitting, will be held on the evening of June 4 on Booster Field," Hopson said. "The Ceremony will closely follow last year; a family limit of six people, groups of chairs spaced six feet apart, a limited number of people on stage, no contact during the

GRADUATION, page 6

CHESTERFIELD



From left Selectman Trish Colson-Montgomery, Selectman Roger Fuller, Clerk Sandra Wickland, Larry Homberg, Moderator Russell Peotter, and Finance Committee Co-Chairman Lee Manchester, and Finance Committee member Carol Jolly during Annual Town Meeting on Saturday, May 15.

Photos by Peter Spotts



Residents vote on one of the 21 warrant articles during Annual Town Meeting.

Museum repair options merged on Annual Town Meeting floor

By Peter Spotts

Three options for conducting repairs to the Edwards Museum eventually became merged into one solution at Annual Town Meeting on Saturday, May 15, after an hour-long debate in the sunny field behind New Hingham Elementary School.

Dee Cinner and Eileen McGowan brought a citi-

zen's petition to the warrant in addition to two articles for repair options provided by the Selectboard. The petitioners were concerned the board's articles weren't specific enough for the types of materials to be used to preserve the historical building, the biggest one being the use of cedar for the siding.

"Those things were put in there specifically so

those would not be missed," McGowan said.

The Selectboard put forth two repair options for voters, the main difference being one using "historically appropriate materials" and the other utilizing vinyl. The cost difference between the materials was \$60,095 for the historical materials and \$52,700 for

MEETING, page 7

STANDING ROOM ONLY



Sandisfield residents vote on an article at Annual Town Meeting. Residents gathered at the DPW Garage Building at 3 Silverbrook Road for Annual Town meeting on Saturday, May 15. Residents filled chairs inside the garage, leaving others to stand outside to comply with COVID-19 safety protocols. See story page 10.

Photo by Shelby Macri

BLANDFORD

Waldron selected for Highway Supt.

By Mary Kronholm

The Select Board conducted a final interview of the sole candidate remaining for the position of the town's Highway Superintendent, David A. Waldron of Becket.

The board decided to extend an offer of the position and Town Administrator Joshua A. Garcia will negotiate a contract for the coming fiscal year. The current hourly rate for this position is \$35.18.

WALDRON, page 6

GOSHEN

Town Broadband signups open

By Shelby Macri

The town is currently undergoing the construction for the distribution network and the sign-ups for Broadband with the town subsidy has begun.

The initial subscription period started on April 24 and will continue thru Dec. 31, during which residents will be eligible for a \$4,000 subsidy. After this period, residents will have to pay the costs of hooking up to the network out of pocket. With

BROADBAND, page 11

BESKET

Town opts out of mosquito spraying

By Shelby Macri

Many towns across the state have discussed opting-out of the mosquito control spraying program conducted by the State Reclamation and Mosquito Control Board, though Selectman Michael Lavery brought the spraying up for a different reason than most.

Lavery explained that he's a part of a community that's under the Sherwood Greens Road District, which was created in 1990. This is a district through the state and was made to maintain roads and take care of the area it oversees. The area Sherwood Greens oversees has gravel roads,

SPRAYING, page 11

HELLO I AM...

Someone who
can help!

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HILLTOWNS

VOICES OF SUPPORT



Lindsey Maxwell, victim service coordinator for the Massachusetts Probation Service, shares her message for survivors of domestic violence as part of the Southern Hilltowns Domestic Violence Task Force's Hilltown Voice's campaign to raise awareness to prevent and end domestic violence. Hilltown Safety at Home domestic violence advocacy services can be reached at 413-667-2203 or 413-693-9977. Ten to Ten Helpline for people at risk of harming their partner or for those worried someone they know is harming their partner can be reached at 877-898-3411.

Submitted photo

Health Center vaccinations available to 18 and older

Hilltown Community Health Center is now offering COVID-19 vaccinations for all of its patients at sites in Huntington, ages 18 and older. Anyone who receives services from HCHC is eligible, which includes patients of the medical, dental, behavioral health, optometry, or Community Center programs.

In addition, HCHC is now offering vaccinations to all residents of Huntington, Chester, and Middlefield. As the clinic's capacity allows, and on a rolling basis, eligibility will open to other hilltown communities' residents. HCHC will use Massachusetts Department of Public Health data on towns' vaccination rates to ensure that the schedule of eligible communities is based on need.

"We want to make sure that those people who have faced barriers in accessing a vaccination can get the shot," said Eliza Lake, HCHC's Chief Executive Officer. "We know that many people want to receive their vaccination as close to home as possible, and we are working hard to make that happen."

In future weeks and months, HCHC will be conducting extensive outreach to Hilltown residents to identify and contact those who need more information about the vaccine or help accessing a vaccination clinic.

For more information, or to schedule an appointment for a vaccination, please call 413-667-3009, ext. 261.

RMV cautions customers about scam

The Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles is cautioning customers to be aware of a text phishing scam that has been reported here in the commonwealth and in other states. The scam reportedly involves customers receiving text messages, claiming to be from the "DMV," which direct them to click on a provided link to update their personal identifying contact information. Customers can identify this type of text as a phishing scam because it includes "DMV" and in Massachusetts DMV is not the name of the Registry of Motor Vehicles; in Massachusetts, the name of the Registry is abbreviated as "RMV." Any text using the phrase "Department of Motor Vehicles" or "DMV" should be deleted.

Please note that the RMV does not send unsolicited requests for personal and/or contact information to customers by text. Any communication by text from the RMV would be as a result of a customer-initiated request or transaction.

For the latest Registry updates and information, please check Mass.gov/RMV or follow the RMV on Twitter @MassRMV.

Firefighters tackling largest wildland fire since Russell 1999

NORTH ADAMS — Williamstown Fire Chief Craig A. Pedercini, State Fire Warden David Celino and North Adams Mayor Thomas W. Bernard provided an update on the "East Mountain" fire in the Clarksburg State Forest on Monday, May 17.

Firefighters worked hard, aided by the Massachusetts National Guard and State Police helicopter water drops, to bring the fire to 75% containment as of this May 17. The fire is burning in steep, wooded terrain that is difficult to access.

Firefighter operations continued Tuesday, May 18. The expectation is that they will be able to transition to a patrol and "mop-up" operation putting out hot spots over the next several days.

The fire is burning leaf litter and forest debris. The soil itself is moist so it is not burning very deeply, and brooks and streams are serving as natural barriers.

Atmospheric conditions were still favorable for preventing any major health impacts or shifts to populated areas despite smoke being visible overnight.

This is the largest wildland fire in Massachusetts since the April 9, 1999 Tekoa Mountain fire in Russell. It burned 1100 acres and claimed the life of

Russell Deputy Fire Chief John Murphy.

The "East Mountain" fire started burning Friday, May 14, in Williamstown in a remote wooded area that is difficult to access. No structures are threatened by the fire. One firefighter was taken to the hospital over the weekend. He is in good condition but remains hospitalized.

On Tuesday, May 18, 10 firefighters from the Department of Recreation's Bureau of Forest Fire Control and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Park Service resumed operations patrolling the perimeter of the East Mountain fire and putting out hot spots.

As of Monday night, 947 acres had burned. The fire did not grow overnight, and it is now 90% percent contained. Firefighters will monitor the fire daily until we have significant rain. Firefighters returned to the scene on Wednesday, May 19.

Over 120 firefighters from 19 surrounding towns are worked the fire lines today in a difficult and labor-intensive effort to contain the fire. These include Adams Forest Wardens; Bennington, Vermont Fire Department; Bennington

FIRE, page 7


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HUNTINGTON

Council on Aging aims for brighter summer

By Peter Spotts

HUNTINGTON — As vaccines continue to become more readily available to all hilltown residents, Council on Aging Coordinator Kathleen Peterson is hoping to be able to begin holding more activities to help get seniors together in the community once again.

Peterson met with the Selectboard to discuss her plans on Wednesday, May 12, and told them depression is just as much an issue for seniors as COVID-19.

“My concern is continuous isolation. What’s happening is seniors are dying not from covid, they’re dying from depression due to isolation,” Peterson said. “Also, some of them need a little more help that can’t get because we can’t do volunteers going [in person].”

The COA has been running a variety of drop-off programs for vegetables, brown bag program, arts and crafts, puzzles, and virtual exercise classes. While those efforts continue, Peterson is looking to be able to bring everyone together safely.

“I want to be able to have things like educational health and wellness programs, physical health and wellness programs,” she said. “Just increasing resources and fun things games, puzzles, more community events in which grandparent raising children can be supported and have activities they can bring the kids too... Trying to make their lives a little brighter and bringing hope.”

In order to do this, Peterson needs a waiver for participants in COA activities to protect the town from liability in case someone gets COVID-19. A draft has been written and sent to town legal

counsel for review. Peterson said once the review is complete, the COA can begin looking at implementing its plans. The COA currently has waivers for its exercise and trip programs.

“Basically, there will be a waiver for every activity,” Peterson said. “I’m trying to get permission to open up in the near future; in order to do that safely and in order to ensure our town wouldn’t be subject to any liabilities would be to get permission for waivers for the release of liabilities and training for volunteers and participants.”

Peterson also informed the board she’d like to pursue a project she’s been working on the past several years to get more lights for safe crossings on Route 20 and Route 112. She said there are issues with seniors trying to cross both highly traveled roads to get to stores on the other side of the street and there

have been accidents in the past.

“People are travelling at 45 to 50 miles per hour even though it’s [the speed] supposed to go down,” she said. “Accidents have happened, and potential accidents could happen.”

Peterson said Walk Boston did a walk audit in 2017 and a Huntington Walks Map was put together in 2019. A Go for Life Event using the map ran into similar issues.

“People were utilizing the map and finding it’s hard to cross that street,” Peterson said.

The Selectboard told Peterson she can pursue the project if she gets a grant. Peterson is also pursuing grants for caregiver support and to make a Huntington Café; she’s going to keep working with her board members to try and make the upcoming days a little brighter for town seniors.

Town Memorial Day parade participants deadline May 26

HUNTINGTON — The Town of Huntington will be having a Memorial Day Parade on Monday, May 31.

The parade will assemble at Pettis Field at 8 a.m. and march to the gazebo on the Town Green for a

ceremony. Marchers and spectators are required to follow all current state COVID-19 guidelines.

Veterans and other groups who are interested in marching are asked to call Lori Belhumeur at 413-667-3169 by Wednesday, May 26.

Special, ATM convene June 7

HUNTINGTON — The Town’s Special Town Meeting and Annual Town Meeting will be held on Monday, June 7, in the Performing Arts Center at Gateway Regional Middle/High School located at 12 Littleville Road.

The Special Town Meeting will begin at 6:30 p.m. and will be followed by the Annual Town Meeting at 7:00 p.m. If all business is not completed on June 7, the Annual Town Meeting will continue on Tuesday, June 8, at 7:00 p.m.

The meetings will follow the state’s guidance for Town Meetings. Residents that are feeling sick or exhibiting any of the following symptoms —fever, cough, shortness of breath, chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, or new

loss of smell — or have potentially been exposed to someone with confirmed or suspected COVID-19, should not attend the meetings.

Social Distancing will apply to all attendees of the meeting. Attendees must have facial coverings. Attendees are to leave three empty seats and one row between individuals and household groups. Members of the same household may sit together. Two restrooms will be provided with cleaning staff in attendance to clean between uses.

Handouts will be available in individual packets and it is recommended that they not be shared. Please call the Selectboard office at 413-512-5200 or admin@huntingtonma.us with any questions.

NORWICH HILL

The First Congregational Church of Huntington reminds everyone even though our physical doors are closed until further notice, we are most definitely open for worship, praise, ministry, and fellowship. We are an Open and Affirming Church inviting, welcoming, and affirming everyone — seekers, believers, and wonderers alike — on their journey of faith, to join in 10 a.m. Zoom Sunday worship.

Our reading from Acts 2:1-21 invites us into the story of Pentecost and to wonder about the Spirit poured out on everybody and what that means for us to have the Spirit of God within us. The message for today will be delivered by the Rev. Darrell Goodwin, Executive Conference Minister, of the Southern New England Conference of the United

Church of Christ.

The pastor is always available to speak with you. If you do not receive our emails and would like to connect with our Zoom worship service and/or fellowship time, please contact Pastor Carol at firstchurchofhuntington@gmail.com to receive the information you will need to participate or send us a message on Facebook.

Please use the phone numbers and email address provided to stay in touch or to contact the pastor. You are also invited to find us on Facebook at “Norwich Hill” for updates, information, and spiritual encouragement. For more information, please contact 413-667-3935 or 860-798-7771 or firstchurchofhuntington@gmail.com.

Local author publishes book

HUNTINGTON — Mimi Caban, resident and first-time author, has published her first book “The Binge Visioning Technique™: When You Want to Mannafest* A Glorious Life!” and will feature it as part of the Authors on the Green Book Show in Westfield on Sunday, May 23.

The show is put on by the Whip City Wordsmiths, a Westfield based group of over 50 published authors of which Caban is a part of. Caban will have her book for sale at the show and she will be sharing a booth with writing partner and internationally known public speaker, Wallace Johnson, aka “New Mystic,” author of six books under that pseudonym and former linebacker for the University of Oklahoma. Look for their white tent from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. on the Westfield Town Green.

Caban developed the Binge Visioning Technique as a manifesting tool in 2016. The technique is based on scientific research and spiritual principles that she synthesized over the past

20 years. She has taught the BVT to many people across the country. It has helped them in such profound ways that she decided to capture it in a colorful, workbook format that anyone can follow.

She does public speaking, leads interactive sessions on creativity, faith, imagination, writing, musicianship and creative expression using all of the arts. She is continuously writing new music and has four other books in the works including “You Don’t Have to White Knuckle It! The Recovering Addict’s Tool Kit: Ways to Feel High Right Now Without Wrecking Your Life,” which will also be published May 2021.

“The Binge Visioning Technique™: When You Want to Mannafest* A Glorious Life!” is available at www.amazon.com/~e/B094HH6Q8S. To organize a book signing or if you would like to be notified when her new books are published, contact Caban at bvtbook@gmail.com or speak to her at an event.

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OPINION

GUEST COLUMN

Technology’s impact on sleep

By Diane Testa

Anyone driving west on the Mass Pike in recent months may have noticed an Xfinity billboard announcing, “Give your Wi-Fi a bedtime.” One may wonder why the tech industry is promoting the shutting off of a wireless device at night. The company’s goal is to offer parents a tool for managing their children’s screen time. So is screen time affecting sleep? Moreover, are electronic devices affecting the quality of sleep? This article explores some of the science behind these questions.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention states that adults need between seven to nine hours of sleep per night for proper health, while teenagers need even more sleep, between eight to 10 hours per night. However, their website indicates that roughly one third of adults in America receive inadequate sleep due to various factors. In a CDC survey from 2013, almost 70% of teenagers reported obtaining insufficient sleep. Part of the reason could be that 75% of them sleep with their phone beneath their pillow, as reported by a Pew Research study.

Screen time is one factor contributing to sleep disturbances. The daily exposure to sunlight presents the brain with all colors of light, and the blue light within sunlight, in particular, helps to keep people more alert and uplift one’s mood during the day. A computer monitor or a cell phone screen emits artificial light that is comprised of disproportionately more blue light than is contained in natural sunlight. Since the brain is particularly sensitive to blue light, the excess stimulation from electronic screens can impact the body’s natural circadian rhythm, or sleep-wake cycle. Blue light causes this disruption in one of two ways: by diminishing the release of a brain hormone called melatonin and by suppressing the type of brainwaves that induce sleep. Melatonin is the primary hormone that regulates the body’s sleep-wake cycle. Therefore, the use of screens in the evening or even excessively during the day has significant impacts on the ability to fall asleep or to remain asleep during the night.

Researchers at Harvard University Medical School have reported on the adverse impact of blue light from screens on sleep, and have also noted that the energy-efficient LED lights that many people are now using in their homes emit an excess of blue light. They suggest wearing glasses that specifically filter the blue light of the screens and avoiding screens two to three hours before bedtime. One additional suggestion is to spend a good amount of time outdoors to be exposed to natural sunlight, which will improve the quality of sleep.

Last month, the Royal Society of Arts in England awarded a fellowship to its youngest-ever recipient, a 15-year old boy named Montgomery Lord, for his research demonstrating that the use of technology at bedtime disrupts the circadian rhythm. This prestigious award places him among brilliant minds such as Benjamin Franklin and Stephen Hawking. Through the United Nations, Lord launched a citizen science project called iTech Explorers to study screen time’s impact on adolescents, with the aim to influence government decision makers to improve children’s health. His

SLEEP, page ?

Corrections policy

If you notice a factual error in our pages, please let us know, so that we can set the record straight. Email information to countryjournal@turley.com, or call us at 413-283-8393.

Corrections will be printed in the same section where the error originally occurred.



GUEST COLUMN

A dahlia fetish

While I always devote a portion of the vegetable garden to cut flower plots for the girls and I, last summer in particular we really got into picking big, beautiful bouquets for the house. One flower that did particularly well for us was the dahlia. I had four varieties total in varying sizes and color, and boy did these add a lot to the vase. I enjoyed harvesting them so much that I invested in a sampler pack from Old House Gardens mail order company, as well as another couple varieties from local growers. I can’t wait to be surprised by what is in my sample pack.

Today was the designated day to plant them. I was a little nervous because the soil temperatures have only begun to warm up, but I had the time so I did it and will pray for the best. Sometimes you just have to do what you have to do! Read on to learn about this unique flower.

Dahlias are not hardy in our area. For that reason we wait until the danger of frost has passed to plant them. They can be started from seeds but most are grown from tubers of a named variety that was purchased from a nursery or mail order company. According to one source, there are some 50,000 named dahlia varieties! Flowers can vary in size from mignon singles that are a mere 2 inches across to AA size which grow over 10 inches wide.

Plant heights vary as well, ranging from six inches to 20 feet tall! Six different size flowers and 14 shapes are possible with colors that appear in nearly every shade except for true blue. Small varieties make especially good bedding plants, mixing well with other annual and perennial garden flowers. Large flowered types are suitable “specimen” plants that stand well on their own in nearly any gardening situation. All are great and long-lasting cut flowers.

Dahlias have the reputation of being “high maintenance,” probably because they need to be staked and pinched. They are also prone to insect and disease problems. None of this should dissuade you from growing them, however. Plant dahlias in full sun in fertile soil amended sparingly with compost and organic fertilizers. Most tubers are planted about three inches deep and one to three feet away from one another, depending on plant size. Providing enough air circulation between plants will help keep diseases at bay.

Most gardeners install a stake at planting time and attach the dahlia to it as it grows, beginning when it is a foot tall. Subsequent ties are made every 18 inches or so depending on variety. Without the use of stakes, large flowers will likely topple

in the wind and rain, sometimes taking a good portion of the plant with it.

Pinching dahlias is another good practice. When the plant has three sets of leaves gently remove its growth tip. This will encourage more branching and inevitably more flowers. Once blooming starts, it is important to cut away spent blooms on a regular basis; tubers will grow stronger because of it. Dahlias thrive on sufficient moisture, especially since they are shallow rooted. Furnish them with one inch per week during active growth. As the growing season draws to a close, hold back on water and any supplemental fertilization you have been providing. This will give the tubers a chance to harden off before they are removed from the ground.

Dig up dahlia tubers either just prior to or soon after frost hits. Leave a small portion of stem attached to the tubers; it is a great place to adhere a label. Take it from me, it is easy to forget a name over the winter months! Soil should be eased off the tubers with a spray of water before placing in storage. Choose a location to overwinter your tubers that maintain 40 to 50 degrees temps and 90% humidity. These conditions will keep them dormant and healthy until it is time to replant. Many people have good luck using a cold basement or root cellar; small quantities of tubers can be stored in the crisper drawer of the refrigerator. Placing tubers in damp peat moss, saw dust, shredded leaves or even ventilated plastic bags will help to prevent shriveling. Be sure to check on your tubers every couple of weeks throughout the offseason. Should you see shriveling, mist them with clean water and re-dampen the medium in which they were placed. If you see mold, bring down the temperature and humidity level.

Some dahlias like to get a jump-start on the season by prestarting dahlias indoors. We have done this occasionally at Old Sturbridge Village, and I am always amazed at just how fast the plants grow, and how quickly they outgrow their pots and become leggy. If you attempt it, four weeks prior to the last spring frost would be soon enough.

It’s my hope that you will venture into the land of dahlia growing and love it as much as I do!

Roberta McQuaid graduated from the Stockbridge School of Agriculture at the University of Massachusetts. For the last 28 years, she has held the position of staff horticulturalist at Old Sturbridge Village. She enjoys growing food as well as flowers. Have a question for her? Email it to ekenedy@turley.com with “Gardening Question” in the subject line.

EDITORIAL POLICY

Letters to the editor should be 500 words or less in length. We require letter writers to include his or her name, town of residence and home telephone number. We must authenticate authorship prior to publication. We reserve the right to edit or withhold any submissions deemed to be libelous or contain unsubstantiated allegations, personal attacks, defamation of character and offensive language. All unknown or alleged facts and quotations offered by the author need to cite credible, unbiased sources.

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OPINION

HILLTOWN HISTORY

Slithering Sidewinders

By Deborah Daniels

Hiking this spring we have come across a bumper crop of snakes, garter snakes all of them. The name garter snake comes from their stripes which look like old time garters that kept your socks up. The garter snakes we saw were impressively fast at slide, sidewinding away from us. I'm not sure who was more spooked the snake or us? But upon seeing this sign about rattlesnake habitat, it was time to learn up on snakes. Most snakes you meet while hiking are garter snakes. They are considered harmless to people. They are not aggressive; they have no hollow fangs with poison and give no hugs. They shy away from any contact. However, be aware snakes have quick reflexes and will bite in their own defense if provoked. Unfortunately garter snakes have recently been discovered to produce small amounts of a mild venom (a neurotoxin) that would affect small prey and not humans. Mostly you can put the notion away that you are likely to be bit by a garter snake. What else do we know about snakes?

Garter snakes come in many shades and colors. They usually have three stripes that run down the length of their body. These stripes can be yellow, white, green, or brown and even be absent or poorly defined or with alternating rows of dark spots that run along a central stripe. They also come in solid black. The head of the garter snake is wider than its neck and most often the belly is lighter in color. Garter snakes can be 18-54 inches long. Garter snakes brumate, which is like hibernation, where they sleep in natural cavities such as tree stumps, old rodent burrows and under rock piles. They do not tunnel but they will use rodent tunnels as shelter. They are very adaptable and can survive in extreme conditions. You will find them in meadows, woodlands, along marshes or near water such as the edges of streams, ponds, and lakes. They dine on worms, snails, insects, crayfish, toads, small fish, baby birds and occasionally small mammals such as mice. They swallow their food whole and let their powerful digestive juices do the rest of the work. Not a sight for polite society!

They have a forked red tongue that is tipped with black. This is very much a sensory organ. They use it to smell and sense vibrations that can tell where other snakes have passed by and where prey are located. They have good vision. They do not have eyelids, so their eyes always appear open. They are active during the day. Due to their cold bloodedness, they



A garter snake seen hiking in Russell.
Submitted photos by Deborah Daniels

use the sunshine to warm themselves. They are mainly solitary, but they will sleep in groups to stay warm. Snakes form a tight coil to reduce heat loss.

Garter snakes mate as soon as they come out of hibernation. Imagine coming upon a snake ball, that is a mass of mating snakes! Babies are incubated in the female's lower abdomen for two to three months. They are born as baby snakes in late July and August in litters that range from 10 to 40 young snakes, five to nine inches long. They are fully independent at birth. Garter snakes usually live 2 years in the wild and up to 20 years in captivity. They do shed their skin four to 12 times a year, mostly in response to growing larger but shedding also helps to remove parasites and bacteria. A garter snake's eyes may appear clouded over or blue, when it is about to shed its skin. Believe it or not they are kept as pets.

They have predators such as hawks, crows, raccoons, snapping turtles, foxes, herons, large fish, and other snakes such as milk snakes and King snakes. Then there is human intervention endangering snakes such as habitat destruction through the use of pesticides and water pollution and land development. Is it any wonder why they have broods of up to 40 young'uns? Many never survive to become adults.

Now about that other snake, the rattlesnake. It is a venomous snake loaded with a hemotoxic venom that causes internal bleeding. It is capable of killing a human. With early medical help snakebites can be treated and death can be prevented. Pain and suffering cannot be



Rattlesnake poster seen while hiking on Mount Tom.



A nest of garter snakes. *Online Image*

prevented. So, listen for a telltale rattle, a rattlesnake will shake its dry hollow keratin (like fingernails) ringed tail in warning for you to leave the area. It can bite in 5/10ths of a second. But mostly it will avoid contact and slither away before you notice it. A rattlesnake is a larger snake, from 1-eight feet in length. It has more of a diamond pattern in tans, brown and black colors, but again it varies considerably. Its skin is scallier in appearance. It has a head that is more triangular in shape. Most likely you have hiked near one but never knew it because again it avoids human contact. I believe we saw one sunning on the rocks at Tekoa. It fled immediately, there was no confrontation. The snake experts say it can strike



An axe blade and mystery item, not bottle openers, found while hiking.



A garter snake consuming a frog. *Online Image*

a distance of half to three-quarters the length of its body. Does that help hikers? And how did they get that figure? Target practice? Yessir, we will avoid snakes and forget Woody Allen's advice to suck out the poison in the movie "Bananas" if you are bit; stay calm, call God and 911! A little help from the Country Journal readers please, can you identify what those metal bits are that look like bottle openers? We found 24 of them lined up in a shallow grave. Keep hiking and stay curious.

Do you have a memory or historical curiosity from the Hilltowns that you'd like to share with your neighbors? Send your story and photos to countryjournal@turley.com.

SLEEP

research reported that roughly 75% of teens felt their diminished sleep due to tech use affected their concentration and productivity during the day.

Dr. Victoria Dunkley, an award-winning integrative psychiatrist from Los Angeles, is an expert on the effects of electronic screen time on children's brain development. In her book, "Reset Your Child's Brain," Dr. Dunkley discusses how interactive electronic screen time hyperstimulates the physiological processes in the developing brain of a young person. She explains that there is a difference in the way the brain processes passive screen time – watching TV from across the room – versus interactive screen time, such as playing video games. The hyperarousal taking place in the brain due to interacting with screens alters brain chemistry and ultimately interferes with behavior, mood, and even sleep. Too much interactive screen time causes children to have non-restorative sleep,

which brings on a host of other health problems.

One disturbing disorder that can arise in children is night terrors due to the chronic stress experienced by the brain from excessive screen time. In this case, a child will wake up in the middle of the night, thrashing and screaming, due to the sudden release of fight-or-flight chemicals in his brain. Shockingly, imaging studies of video-game addicted young people show the same patterns as those adults addicted to drugs. Dr. Dunkley has been able to help over 500 screen-addicted children, teens and young adults regain their normal health by taking on a month-long "fast" from the use of electronics.

Another way that wireless electronics impact sleep is due to the pulsed and polarized electromagnetic fields (EMFs) that they produce. Electrical engineers at the University of Melbourne, Australia have demonstrated that the force exerted on the body by these EMFs causes a dis-

turbance in cells' metabolic processes; one critical effect is a reduction in the production of melatonin.

Consequently, all Americans can benefit from following Xfinity's advice, to "give your Wi-Fi a bedtime." It is best to locate computers and gaming systems outside of the bedroom, and to put substantial limits on screen time for youth, particularly in the hour or two before bedtime. A free software called f.lux can be downloaded to a computer, to adjust the spectrum of light being emitted from the monitor during the day. Also, cell phones can be placed in airplane mode before going to bed. Sleep well and pleasant dreams!

Wilbraham resident Diane Testa holds a doctorate in biomedical engineering and is a senior lecturer in engineering at Western New England University. She writes about technology's impacts on health from her hardwired computer and can be reached for comment at wiredinwilbraham@gmail.com.

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BLANDFORD

Picnic goes grab-and-go

Cultural Council seeks artists

BLANDFORD – The Annual Memorial Day Picnic will have a new twist this year. It’s a Grab-and-Go picnic. The picnic will be in Watson Park immediately following the Memorial Day Observations at Veterans’ Park and Town Commons and parade on Monday, May 31. The Recreation Committee has organized a picnic lunch of grilled hot dogs with all the fixings in Individual packets, a bag of chips, and serving up potato or fruit salad, a full size candy bar, water or soda. The MooLicious Farm ice cream truck will be on hand for dessert with sundaes and all the toppings for one hour from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m.

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WALDRON

from page 1

Waldron currently has worked for the Highway Department since August 2020. He will replace retiring Highway Superintendent Rene Senecal. Waldron was not ready to comment but said, “I’m a little overwhelmed right now.” He is a retired E-8 First Sergeant/Master Sergeant with 30 years of service in the U.S. Army, both active duty and National Guard. Prior to coming to Blandford, he was with the Washington, Mass. Highway Department from 2019 and the Hinsdale Highway Department from 2016 to 2019. He has over 30 years of Class B truck-driving experience and holds 1C, 2A and 4G licenses to operate department equipment. The Selectboard also made the following appointments at Monday night’s meeting. David Mottor as Fire Chief, Forest Warden, and a member of the Emergency Management Team; Jennifer Girard and Police Chief Tammy Weidhass were also appointed to the Emergency Management Team. The board appointed Tammy Weidhass as Chief of Police for the coming year; Sumner Robbins was appointed to the Zoning Board of Appeals as an alternate; Gordon Avery as Water Superintendent; and Doug Emo as Inspector of Veterans’ Graves and groundskeeper for Watson Park. The board made a final review and approved the warrant for the June 21 Annual Town Meeting. Treasurer/Collector Sara Hunter reported that her office had sent out tax delinquent letters to 170 parcel owners with a total of \$569,500 tax dollars owed the town. To date, the town has received \$155,000 in delinquent tax dollars including fees. The board decided to re-open the town office building for business as usual on Saturday, May 29. There may be some restrictions but not until after the Board of Health meets later this week. The board also authorized Town Administrator Joshua A. Garcia to proceed with contractual arrangements with Dennis K. Burke, Inc. of Taunton for the town’s supply of gasoline and diesel fuel. The town will pay a fixed price of \$2.92 a gallon for gasoline and \$2.75 a gallon for diesel. The board went into executive session to discuss contract negotiation and returned to open session with the announcement of the selection of David A. Waldron as the next Highway Department Superintendent.



David A. Waldron

CHESTER

Board Health receives grant award

Memorial Day parade recruiting veterans

CHESTER — The Town of Chester has been awarded a Sustainable Materials Recovery Program Municipal Grant from the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection. The Chester Board of Health faced significant challenges during COVID at the transfer station. The BOH implemented safe procedures for both the attendants and residents in order to continue to recycle and follow all DEP regulations. The transfer station remained fully open during COVID-19, with the exception of the swap shop, and provided both rubbish and recycling services by mandating face coverings, providing gloves, practicing social distancing, sanitizing all areas and education to the attendants. The grant will be used for a new Universal Waste shed and the town will be able to accept batteries, thermostats, thermometers, and household light bulbs free of charge with an annual transfer station permit. The BOH looks forward to expanding recycling in the Town of Chester in the years to come.

Leisure lodging permits filing open

CHESTER — The Board of Health would like to remind Bed and Breakfast operators and owners that a 2021 Hospitality-Leisure Lodging Permit must be filed in order to operate in 2021. Please print a permit application found on www.TownofChester.net under the “Documents” tab and mail in or drop in the black box in front of town hall. The fee is \$150 per calendar year and runs July to June. An inspection is required. Please contact the Chester Board of Health with questions 413-354-7781, 413-519-3396, or BoardofHealth@town-ofchester.net.

CHESTER — Chester will hold a Memorial Day ceremony and parade on Monday, May 31, beginning at 9 p.m. at Town Hall. The town is seeking all interested veterans who would like to march or be in the color guard. For more information, please contact Memorial Day Committee member Barbara Huntoon at 413-207-1104.



Free vaccinations at community center

CHESTER — Free COVID-19 vaccinations are being offered to Chester residents by the Hilltown Community Center at its Huntington vaccination clinic. To schedule an appointment, or for more information, call 413-667-3009, ext. 261. Vaccines are safe and one of the most important tools we have to protect hilltown residents, their family, and the community from COVID-19.

Road work begins May 26, expect delays

CHESTER — Milling and paving will be done on Bromley Road in Chester from the Chester-Huntington town line to the intersection of East River Road beginning on Wednesday, May 26. Please expect delays and find alternate routes where possible.

SCHOOLS & YOUTH

GRADUATION

from page 1



ceremony, and appropriate social distancing protocols being followed.” Gateway Principal Jason Finnie said there are more specific details on the school’s website and can be found in the news section at grsd.org. The graduation ceremony will be held at 6 p.m. Two rain dates are set for June 5 and June 6, but the start time of 6 p.m. is the same. There are two practice days for the ceremony on June 1 and June 3, both at 11:30 a.m. and there will be a drive-in senior celebration on June 2. The school asks seniors to attend with decorated cars, the spirit of celebration, and a readiness to have a senior send-off after a unique year. The valedictorian, salutatorian, and Golden Achievement winner will be announced shortly before the celebration. There will also be a procession with photo opportunities and other fun activities along with a senior movie on the green. After celebrating with their class, seniors will head off on various paths; those who want to attend the ceremony and see seniors in their last stage of high school should visit the Gateway website to pre-register for the ceremony. Guests are asked to complete a registration form that is to be completed before Friday, May 21; only one form must be completed for each household. If guests are attending from multiple households, there will be multiple forms. Additionally, guests who aren’t from the same household must be seated at least six feet apart from other guests and households, while guests from the same household are able to sit together. Masks will also be required for all staff, guests, and graduates expect for a medical condition or disability. Graduates must wear their masks at all times, and they’ll be six feet apart from each other; commencement speakers can remove their masks during their remarks if there is at least six feet between the audience and speaker. Graduates can take their masks off for designated photography spots. The school is following Department of Elementary and Secondary Education guidelines and for information on safety protocols are online, as are student attire guidelines. For more information on graduation, visit www.grsd.org.

CHESTERFIELD

TOWN LINES



Karen McTaggart and Russ LaPierre of the Hilltown Hikers take photos of the Chesterfield-Huntington boundary post.



Kim Kelliher, Russ LaPierre, and Ronnie check out a vintage truck.

Submitted photos

MEETING

from page 1

the vinyl with a 15% contingency funding added to each project’s estimated total cost.

“The best way to restore is to try to keep the historic fabric of the building,” said resident and historical building restorer Kent Hicks. “We’d recommend vinyl siding is not a long-term solution. It will be in the land fill eventually and it will be in the landfill a long time.”

The petition was for \$40,095 before the 15% contingency, as McGowan and Cinner didn’t include roof replacement and drainage work, which is part of the board’s proposals. Selectboard member Trish Colson-Montgomery was adamant the board firmly believes doing the roof and drainage while other restoration work is being done to the museum is the best course of action. The roof needs to have the singles replaced and new plywood installed, and Colson-Montgomery said the board is concerned with water draining.

“We don’t want to end up with rotted sills again,” she said. “If we’re going to do this project, let’s do it completely.”

McGowan said the petition didn’t include the roof or drainage in its package because they felt it isn’t an emergency need and could be done at a later time. They’re also concerned a study will be needed for the drainage and the costs may not be accurate.

A couple of residents in attendance questioned if the project should even be done right now. With major projects upcoming for a new public safety complex, town offices, and issues at New Hingham Elementary School, including a new boiler, on the horizon, the question was raised if it’s the best time to commit funding into the museum.

“A museum is not just about how many hours it’s open, it’s about preserving the items that are in it,” countered Nancy Rich. “There’s no other place for this collection...we do not need to kick

this can down the road.”

Finance Committee member Lee Manchester added the town is in a healthy spot with its free cash and even funding the most expensive museum option will still put the entire ATM warrant free cash expenditures at under 20% of the town’s free cash total.

An amendment was proposed to add the cedar siding, shutter repair, and windows from the petition to Article 16 with the roof and drainage included.

McGowan and Cinner submitted two other petitions. The first, Article 19, sought to have the town vote to accept Mass. General Law Chapter 114, Sec. 22 through 26 to change the Cemetery Commissioners from appointed to elected positions. Selectman Don Willard argued against this, pointing out the best qualified people for the job like Cinner herself could end up losing a popularity contest to a lesser candidate. Several people at the meeting also cited issues with the town getting enough people to run for current offices and having vacancies.

McGowan rebutted the democratic process shouldn’t be discounted and making it election-based would also remove the commissioners from being under the Selectboard’s supervision.

Article 20 was the other petition, which sought to have the Cemetery Commissioners share the Selectboard’s current authority to establish rules and regulations for town-owned cemeteries.

Moderator Rus Peotter explained to voters because this article would rescind statutory authority from the Selectboard, although the article doesn’t explicitly state this, the passing of the article would make it non-binding. Voters chose to vote Article 19 down 23 in favor, 27 opposed. Article 20 was removed from the table after a motion was made to do so.

The fourth and final citizen peti-

tion was submitted by the Historical Commission to amend the Wireless Communications Zoning overlay bylaw to add “or within 750 feet of the district designated as Chesterfield Center Historic District by the National Park Service.”

The amended bylaw would read “No wireless communications facility shall be located within 200 feet of an existing residential building or within 750 feet of the district designated as a Town Center (TC) on the Chesterfield Zoning Map or within 750 feet of the district designated as Chesterfield Center Historic District by the National Park Service.”

Planning Board Chair Charles Valencik said the Planning Board was required to hold a public hearing for the petition and unanimously voted to recommend tabling the article.

“There’s too many problems with it,” Valencik said. “We recommend to take it off the table until its reworded, rethought.”

Voters went along with Valencik’s recommendation and passed a motion to table the article.

The other 17 articles passed relatively smoothly. Voters approved the town budget for fiscal 2022, which includes a raise for the Town Administrator’s budget from \$52,365 to \$65,365. The Selectboard responded to inquiries about the jump by saying it was necessary to increase the salary while searching for a new town administrator. Sue Labrie’s current position is for 32-hours a week and the increase does not change the hourly rate, but provides funding if 40-hours a week full-time is needed to secure a good candidate.

“It would depend ultimately how much the person takes in terms of hours,” Colson-Montgomery said. “It just left us latitude.”

Voters also approved the borrowing of \$60,000 to purchase a new mower

attachment for the Highway Department 61 to 3. Several residents had concerns with whether the town needs a new mower and skepticism that a shared piece of equipment won’t cause issues with repairs and maintenance.

“Do we really need an over-the-rail mower?” asked one resident. “Wouldn’t that money be better spent getting a small tractor with a brush hog?”

Highway Superintendent Matt Smith rebutted, “We still need it to mow over the guard rails and we need it to cut higher branches the tractor can’t reach.”

The mower cost is being shared with Worthington and an agreement will be made between the towns.

“There will be an agreement with Worthington so we all share equally the costs of repair...and any incidental costs that would come along,” Fuller said. “I think it can be very successful and the save the town the cost of purchasing something in its entirety.”

Other approved expenditures included \$60,000 for the School Building Maintenance Stabilization Fund, and \$170,000 for the Capital Projects Stabilization Fund.

Voters also approved the creation of a Broadband Network Operations Enterprise Fund and the Municipal Light Plant to fall under the jurisdiction of a new Municipal Light Plant Board. The board will be made up of one selectman, one Finance Committee member, one member with technical expertise, and two at-large members from the community.

“We need citizens to be on the MLP Board,” said MLP Manager Justin West, who announced at the meeting he plans to step down from overseeing the operations within the next six months. “This board will make policy decisions, make rate changes up or down, and work with the MLP manager to run the system.”

MIDDLEFIELD

MIDDLEFIELD SENIOR CENTER

Lunch is served at the Senior Center, 169 Skyline Trail, Middlefield, each Wednesday at noon.

A \$3 donation is suggested. Reservations should be made, and meal choice stated, by calling and

leaving a message at 413-623-9990 the Monday before. Pick-up and delivery are available.

The menu on Wednesday, May 26, is roast turkey with gravy, butternut squash, homemade stuffing, rye bread, and fruit crunch bar.

FIRE

from page 2

Rural Fire Department, Charlemont Fire Department, Clarksburg Fire Department, Florida Fire Department, Franklin County Hand Crew, Hinsdale Fire Department, North Adams Fire Department, Pownal, Vermont Fire Department; Pownal Valley Fire Department, Rowe Fire Department, Richmond Fire Department, Savoy Fire Department, Shaftsbury, Vermont Fire Department; Stamford Fire Department, Williamstown Fire Department, and Williamstown Forestry,

In addition to all the mutual aid firefighters, the state Bureau of Fire Control, the State Fire Marshal’s Office, the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency, the Massachusetts State Police the Massachusetts National Guard are all assisting, and the National Park Service.

The Appalachian Trail is impacted by the fire and hikers should stay clear of this area for their own health and safety.

RUSSELL

FIRST COMMUNION





Lila Castro of Russell, left, and Lilyanne Carr of Southamptton received the sacrament of First Holy Communion on Sunday, May 16. A special thanks to Father Ron, faith formation director, Deb Bogoff, Judy Boudreau, and Jodie Castro for their guidance, support and encouragement to the first communicants. It was a beautiful celebration.



The Castro family pictured, from left, Jim, Missy, Lila, and Jodie. Submitted photos



The Boudreau/Carr family pictured, from left, Kiley, Blake, Lilyanne, Nate, and Cole.



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The Town of Russell is seeking qualified applicants for two open part time positions on the Board of Assessors. Successful candidates should have the following qualifications and experience:

- A working knowledge of Massachusetts General Laws related to municipal property assessment for tax purposes.
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills.
- Preferred knowledge of computerized appraisal systems (CAMA) programs and GIS applications such as Vision 8 software.
- MA Department of Revenue Certification as Assessor.
- Town of Russell residents will be given preference.
- A current MA driver's license and transportation are required.

Interested parties should submit a letter of interest and resume to: Tom Ray, BOA Chairman
Town of Russell 65 Main Street
Russell MA 01071
or email trassessor@russellma.net

RUSSELL

Cultural Council announces 2021 grant recipients

RUSSELL — The Russell Cultural Council announced the awarding of grants totaling more than \$10,000 for cultural programs to benefit the residents of Russell and neighboring communities. The amount available includes \$4,900 received for fiscal 2021.

Like many Massachusetts communities, Russell was hit hard by the pandemic. Parks and recreational areas, churches, schools, restaurants, and retail establishments were forced to curtail operations. Rips were cancelled, in-door dining came to a halt and public events were either presented online or cancelled altogether. To further protect the community, officials in the Town of Russell closed all town offices to the public.

These restrictions as well as those imposed by the State, caused many of last year's grant recipients to cancel their programs. Fortunately, the Mass Cultural Council made it possible for Local Cultural Councils to combine the unused funds with those received in fiscal 2021. The result was a larger pool of money available for this year's applicants.

The Russell Cultural Council is part of a network of 329 Local Cultural Councils serving all 351 cities and towns in the Commonwealth. The LCC Program is the largest grassroots cultural funding network in the nation, supporting thousands of community-based projects in the arts, sciences, and humanities every year. The state legislature provides an annual appropriation to the Mass Cultural Council, a state agency, which then allocates funds to each community.

Decisions about which activities to support are made at the community level by a board of municipally appointed volunteers. The members of the Russell Cultural Council are Dale Oleksak, Jackie Decker, Nancy Mezger, Jennifer Pappas and Sue Maxwell.

Each year this dedicated group of volunteers are tasked with making limited resources go as far as possible. The growing number of applicants can make the decision-making process challenging. "We had some tough decisions

to make," said the local council's Chairperson Dale Oleksak. "This year we received grants from 18 applicants. With a limited amount of funding available it really came down to deciding which of the projects best suited the cultural needs of our community."

Statewide, more than \$3 million is distributed by local cultural councils each year. Grants support an enormous range of grass-roots activities including concerts, exhibitions, radio and video productions, field trips for schoolchildren, after-school youth programs, writing workshops, historical preservation efforts, lectures, First Night celebrations, nature and science education programs for families and town festivals. Nearly half of LCC funds support educational activities for young people.

Fiscal 2021 grant recipients are Bad News Jazz & Blues Orchestra, Blandford Fair, Littleville Fair, Sevenars Concerts, Blandford Historical Society, Chester Theatre Company, David Maloof, Diane Dix, Gregory Maichack, Henry Lappen, John Porcino, Marilyn Morales, North Hall Arts Festival, and Trevor Smith.

The Russell Cultural Council will seek applications again in the fall. For guidelines and complete information on the Russell Cultural Council, send an email to Dale Oleksak, Chairperson. She may be reached at culturalcouncil@russellma.net. Applications and more information about the Local Cultural Council Program are available online at www.mass-culture.org.

Local student named to Dean's List

RUSSELL — ShyAnne Jones, a Junior Studio Art major, was among approximately 800 Bob Jones University students named to the Spring 2021 Dean's List. The Dean's List recognizes students who earn a 3.00-3.74 grade point average during the semester.

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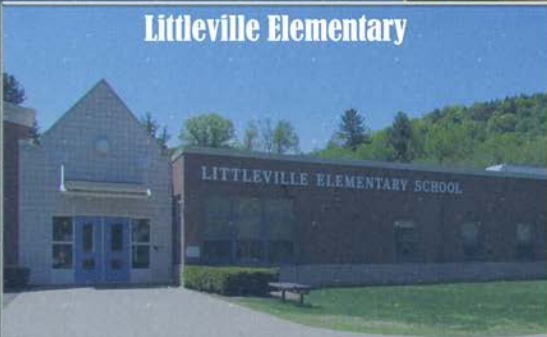
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OTIS

Library ready to serve community this summer

By **Katheen Bort**

OTIS — “Communities get the libraries they deserve.” I heard this comment at an open zoom meeting of the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners. I remember it made me reflect on the relationship between the Otis library and the community. The community provides the library with the building and a portion of the cost for items, services, and programs. The library tries to be the community center for the town. It has been exciting to reopen the library. People are excited to come in, see the new books, DVD’s, and audiobooks. Most of all they are happy to share their stories and tell us how they have survived, what type of vaccine they received, and how their families and friends are doing. We work to get to know you, to develop your interests, to keep you connected to what is going on in town, to extending your world to the outside. The library is committed to serving the community.

The library will extend its present hours through the month of June — closed Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, and Saturday 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. The library can serve you curbside, or you may come in to browse, use our technology, and get assistance from the librarians. As we reopen, we invite you to join us. Come in and get a library card if you do not have one or renew the card you have had but not used in a long time. Come and visit us.

Renewed! The library has renewed the approximately 20 museum passes which will provide reduced or free admission. I thank the Otis Cultural Council for providing the funding to continue the pass to Magic Wings, the butterfly museum. For a complete listing and descriptions on new procedures please contact the library or visit the town website townofotisma.org.

The library’s annual summer craft fair will be Sept. 25, with Sept. 26 as a rain date. There will be plenty of oppor-

tunities for vendors or volunteers for this wonderful community event. If you are interested contact us at the library.

Our children’s Summer Reading Program focuses on the independent reading of works by a particular author. Children select books and brag tag incentives will be given when they have completed the reading. Reading prizes from the Massachusetts Library System will be awarded at the end of our summer program.

As we enter the era of technological busyness the demand for connectivity sometimes outweighs the services. We have technology to serve you, you can search the internet, check your email, print, send faxes and be creative. This year the Commonwealth of Massachusetts is providing a grant that will provide hotspots to rural libraries. Also, the library is purchasing a new IPAD and a Chromebook for demonstrations on how to use this technology. We can show you how to use LIBBY, the eBook application for CWMARS,

accessing ZOOM programs and using technology for remote and virtual applications. Perhaps you have been nurturing interests and talents during this time of quarantine; we would love to offer you the opportunity to share with others in the community.

The Otis community is growing and changing. New people are moving in, second homeowners have decided to settle here full time, so the population is changing. New groups with diverse interests are developing. Because some interests reflect those of a larger community, we are extending the boundaries. The Historic Commission and other town groups have started new projects and developments such as the one Room Schoolhouse, the St. Paul Project, recreation areas, turbines, and cell towers. Our changing community needs to get the library it deserves. We are working on it, please help us grow and develop. Let us know what you need.

Kathleen Bort is the director of the Otis Free Public Library.

WILLIAMSBURG

Board of Selectmen opts out of mosquito spray

By **Peter Spotts**

WILLIAMSBURG — The Board of Selectmen voted to opt out of the state’s mosquito spraying program after a couple meetings of deliberation on the issue.

Board of Health Chair Donna Gibson and Foothills Health Agent Mark Bushee brought additional information to the board on Thursday, May 13, to discuss the concerns surrounding state spraying and Bushee drafted the application for the town to opt out, which is due May 22.

“It’s [the application] very well done. I would suggest we do that because of the danger of at least one of the toxins in the spray,” Gibson said. “Not only are they harmful to humans with asthma or breathing disorders of any kind, but also they’re causing genetic changes in amphibians, they’re eliminating all our pollinators, and even birds that feed on some of those insects.”

Bushee added, “There’s a lot of evidence that shows spraying doesn’t honestly work. It only compounds the problem. It kills off the dragonflies, which eats the mosquitos, so you have an even worse problem next year.”

Gibson explained the state changed the way spraying operates. In past years, the town had to opt in to get spraying done by the state. However, this year it was changed to an opt out with an additional deadline of May 15.

Gibson brought the issue before the board at the end of April, but there were questions the Selectmen and Board of Health and for the state which they wanted to get answers to before making a decision.

“We’ve had meetings with the state task force on this and we’ve gotten very few answers, if any, to our questions,” she said. “We came forward and tried to get the towns to opt out in places where we have very low, if any, incidents of

those diseases.”

Gibson added many of Burgy’s neighboring communities in the Foothills Health District are also opting out.

Selectman Bill Sayre asked if the Board of Health and talked to do the Highway Department about preventative work, they might do. Gibson said they did, and the department cleans the catch basins and routine maintenance they usually do, but nothing special specifically for mosquitos. By opting out, the town is maintaining what it has done in year’s past, so nothing is changing for how the town handles mosquito season.

“There was basically nothing taking place other than routine maintenance the Highway Department would do with standing water,” she said. “There are no particular special things they do during the summer than they do regularly.”

The Board also wrapped up a couple items from its last meeting. Mary Dudek was appointed to the Public

Safety Complex Building Committee after being left off the appointment list on May 6.

The Board also voted in favor of signing the contract with its new Town Administrator Nicholas Caccamo. The Board had voted to offer the position to Caccamo on April 28. Caccamo will take over for Nardi on May 20.



SANDISFIELD

Marijuana bylaw voted down at Annual Town Meeting

By **Shelby Macri**

SANDISFIELD — Annual Town Meeting was held on Saturday, May 15, at the DPW Highway Garage at 3 Silverbrook Road, where over 100 residents attend voted on 28 warrant articles.

While there were a few short discussions or questions, the article that warranted the most discussion was Article 27 for the Cannabis Establishment Zoning Bylaw. The 14-page bylaw outlines many aspects of the zoning bylaws and gives such specific instructions that it restricts Cannabis Establishments, and some residents felt that the bylaw restricted establishments too much. Resident David Hubbard spoke about being against this bylaw and asked fellow voters to vote not to the article, giving the town an opportunity to continue working on Cannabis bylaws that can benefit the town.

“As written, the restrictions are so severe there’s no way for establishments to function and sell products,” Hubbard said. “It’s a competitive industry. These restrictions render it financially impossi-

ble, and it won’t give the town the economy it needs.”

He added Great Barrington had opened a dispensary and within it year it generated approximately \$1 million dollars in revenue for the town, and now there are five dispensaries in town. Hubbard said he’d like to see the town work on the bylaw more before accepting them, because he thinks the cannabis industry can bring a lot of economy to town, but not under this particular bylaw. After asking people to vote no, there was loud applause in support of his remarks; although there was equally supportive applause for those who said to vote yes to the bylaw.

One resident in favor of the bylaw was Cindy True, who spoke about a Cannabis establishment moving in to open about 1,000 feet behind her house.

“I didn’t have choice, they just moved in behind my house,” True said. “Approve this bylaw and don’t let this happen to you.”

She and other residents mention that the establishment True is referring to is a large establishment and is a tier 11

building with barbed wire, lights, and smells rather than a smaller retail or cultivating establishment. While some residents continued to speak against or in favor of the bylaw, the group gathered got to hear from Lev Natan, a prospective resident who bought 11 acres last fall and knows True as a neighbor.

“We bought raw land in hopes of building our dream home on it, with good neighbors in a good neighborhood,” Natan said. “But when we heard about the permit for the cannabis establishment, we didn’t want to build our home in front of a tier 11 factory.”

He added if there were no bylaw then the town could lose other people looking to come into Sandisfield; he mentioned that he’s not voting today because he’s not yet a resident, but he’d like to be a resident and would prefer for bylaws to be in place. Hubbard and others who were against the bylaw said they don’t want to never have bylaws; they just feel the proposed bylaw are too strict and the town could do better.

When asked what would happen if the bylaw wasn’t approved today,

Moderator and Selectboard Chair Brian O’Rourke said that they’d go back to the drawing board and start the process over.

“Then we are tomorrow where we are today, with no bylaws,” O’Rourke said. “I believe the planning board will work on another bylaw with even more public input.”

After a long discussion with both supportive and non-supportive arguments made, resident Jean Williams asked if the town could take a secret vote, so everyone felt comfortable voting. The vote approved this and took a secret vote of 58 in favor and 68 against, the article failed along with the article after which asked to ban all cannabis establishments within the town.

All other articles passed either unanimously or by majority; within the 26 articles there were 22 unanimously accepted articles and four majority accepted articles.

A copy of the ATM Warrant in its entirety or information on the proposed bylaws are available on the under the Finance Committee page at www.sandisfieldma.gov.

BECKET

SPRAYING

from page 1

and lakes along the roads, there are woods and waterways to protect and Lavery was recently made aware that Sherwood Greens has been mosquito spraying for years. This includes during the years where the town of Becket was involved in the mosquito spraying and after the town decide not to become a Mosquito Control area.

The group has been spraying since 2016 without coming before the Selectboard or Board of Health. Lavery said he brought the board’s attention to this because he thought it was odd Sherwood Greens was spraying during years where the town opted out of spraying.

Last month, Lavery brought this topic to his fellow Selectboard members and wanted to give attention to this topic, and the board could decide on a vote at a later meeting.

After having the town’s council look at Sherwood Greens and all the appropriate aspects of this topic; it was determined that the town could not stop the spraying by Sherwood Greens due to their connection with the state. In the May 5, Selectboard meeting, Town Council Joel Bard attended and spoke about what he had found.

“The town can vote to remain opt-out but that doesn’t stop private parties from spraying,” Bard said. “If we opt-out it doesn’t change anything. In regard to Sherwood Greens, they can

vote to spray as I understand it.”

Lavery said after speaking to Bard, he understands the Sherwood Greens Road District was able to enter a contract with the Berkshire Mosquito Control Project. They were able to do this because they’re a quasi-municipal entity who’s residents voted in favor of the contract at their 2016 meeting.

In the same year, the SRMCB voted in July to allow Sherwood Greens to become a Mosquito Control Area. Bard didn’t make a recommendation either for or against the town opting out as he felt it wouldn’t change anything, and Lavery was told Bard would make something more detailed in writing but it hasn’t been provided to the board yet.

Becket has opted out of the spraying in 2010 and refused a vote to return to the mosquito control programs in 2012. The board voted to remain out of the Berkshire Mosquito Control project as a town at the May 5 meeting.

“The opt out vote doesn’t opt the entire town out, just the portions that are not within the boundaries of the 1997 act of legislature which created Sherwood Greens Road Maintenance and Improvement District,” Lavery said. “However, the SGRD is currently not allowed to use the adulticide trunk-mounted spray due to being told to stop by the Becket Board of Health at their April meeting.”

Lavery said the Board of Health stopped the spraying due to the presence of PFAS in the spray being used in previous years by the BMCP. Chris Horton from Mosquito Control has to meet with the Board of health and show written testing proof that PFAS contamination is no longer present in the spray before it can resume. During the May 5 meeting, residents were listening in on the call and some spoke in favor of the Selectboard addressing Sherwood Greens spraying.

Due to the public input and support during the meeting, the Selectboard made a decision to opt out of the Mosquito Control spraying this year.

“The Commonwealth no longer requires a full vote at the annual town meeting to opt out,” Lavery said. “Just a vote of the Selectboard and a public hearing, which was done.”

Due to the evidence presented and the input from the attending townspeople, the board voted to opt out of mosquito spraying this year.

Lavery didn’t want to speak out of turn or speak for the town council and weigh in legally what Sherwood Greens can or cannot do. According to the Sherwood Greens attorney at Cain and Hibbard in Pittsfield, Sherwood Greens do have the ability to spray, although they are on hiatus as they communicate with the Board of Health.

Contested race goes to Levy

BECKET — The May 15 Town Election had one contested race for the five-year Planning Board seat, which went to James Levy over Karen Karlberg in a 60 to 38 vote.

William Elovirta was re-elected to the Selectboard and Ann Gwenneth Spadafora and Charles Garman both won Finance Committee seats unopposed. Michelle Smith ran unopposed for Cemetery Commissioner. The terms are for three years.

Elovirta was also a write-in candidate for Constable along with Robert Ronzio. Laurel Burgwardt was the write-in candidate for the three-year Board of Health seat.

A total of 102 voters participated and cast ballots for the election of candidates. There were two absentee ballots and two spoiled ballots. There were no provisional ballots.



GOSHEN

Register for ATM deadline Friday

GOSHEN — Annual Town Meeting will be held under a tent on the field behind the Town Offices at 40 Main Street on Saturday, June 12, at 9:30 a.m.

The last day to register to vote in

this meeting is Friday, May 21, from 2 to 4 p.m. and 7 to 8 p.m. in the town clerk’s office. Please contact town clerk Kristen Estelle with any questions at 413-268-8236, ext. 107, or clerk@goshen-ma.us.



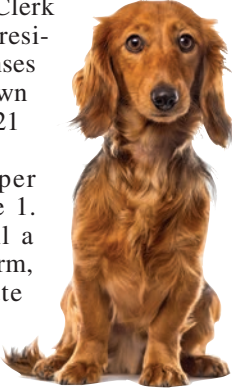
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countryjournal@turley.com

Dog license late fees start June 1

GOSHEN — Town Clerk Kristen Estelle reminds residents that 2020 dog licenses expired March 31, and town dogs must now have a 2021 license.

The \$25 late fee per dog goes into effect June 1. To obtain a license, mail a completed dog license form, current rabies certificate indicating if the dog is spayed or neutered, a check payable to the



Town of Goshen, and a stamped self-addressed envelope, two stamps for multiple licenses.

Neutered/ spayed dogs are \$5 each; intact dogs are \$10. Valid rabies certificates are required and must be sent with the dog license form

A dog licensing form is available at www.goshen-ma.us/dog-licenses. Address the envelope to Goshen Town Clerk, 40 Main Street, Goshen, MA 01032.

BROADBAND

from page 1

a little over two weeks of having sign-ups open, Selectboard member Wayne Glaser said the town already had about 200 residents sign up, and he encourages people to sign up sooner rather than later.

“I want to remind people that even though there are three fiber areas and they’ll be getting built out in different sequences, once one area is finished and tested the customer hook ups will begin and people will be contacted early for hook ups if they sign up early,” Glaser said. “I want to stress to everybody that it’s a long game and not an instant sign up.”

It’s in residents’ best interests to sign up early to be called earlier when hook ups begin and in order to sign up for the town subsidy someone must have an already established building.

Those who are currently building houses or businesses will have to wait to sign up until the building that needs the Broadband is fully built. The town subsidy will cover \$4,000 of the design cost for resident hook-ups; if the design for a building is under that amount, then residents won’t have to pay anything. If the cost is above, then they’ll only have to pay the amount over \$4,000. Each building will have a different cost due to the amount of wire needed to connect the house.

“When Westfield Gas and Electric did an engineering survey, they also went to look at the poles and houses in town to come up with a cost estimate,” Glaser said. “The cost is based on current connection, whether it’s overhead or underground, or how short or long the distance is.”

He said that once the town get to the home installation stage the town will connect with people who will be over the \$4,000 for payment. There are about 650 parcels in town and, while only 200 are signed up now, Glaser hopes everyone will sign up before Dec 31.

The costs for hooking up internet and or phones is listed on the town website, along with weekly updates and schedules for construction. Residential internet subscriptions will cost \$85 monthly while commercial subscriptions will be different based on the number of people using it, the costs range from \$105, \$120, and \$150 monthly. For residents with a phone hookup, an internet subscription will be an extra \$14.99 monthly, while a phone hookup only will cost \$59.95 month-

ly. Phone hookup costs have not been determined yet, but people can check a few places for more information.

The town website posts weekly updates for the Broadband project and construction, keeping each update listed on the Broadband page. People can also visit Whip City Fiber’s website to learn more about hook-ups and other information. Glaser said their Frequently Asked Questions page has helpful information for those interested in signing up for Broadband.

Residents can also sign up through the Whip City Fiber website or call 413-485-1251 for their customer service representatives. The website for sign-ups is linked on the Broadband update page of the town website, www.goshen-ma.us, or go directly to www.whipcityfiber.com/goshen.

This paper publishes birth, engagement, wedding and significant anniversary announcements free of charge.
Simply log on to our web site, choose the paper you want the announcement to appear in, then use our SUBMISSION link to email your information.



www.newspapers.turley.com

WESTHAMPTON

Bike maintenance workshop this Saturday, May 22

WESTHAMPTON — The Westhampton Public Library will hold Bike Maintenance 101 on Saturday, May 22, at 1 p.m. Learn about bikes and its parts and get hands-on experience fixing a flat tire. The program will review how to remove and install bike wheels and tires, patching and replacing tubes, and routine maintenance. All are welcome to bring their own bike, bike pumps, tools, and any questions about repair and maintenance.

Virtual Book Group will return on Tuesday, May 25, at 7 p.m. It meets once a month and is open to new members. They are currently debating its next book to read. For Zoom login information, contact westhampton@cwmares.org.

The Westhampton Public Library is partnering with Grown in Westhampton and local residents to install a pollinator garden featuring early and late blooming plant. Planting days will conclude on Saturday, May 29, from 10 a.m. to noon. Bring gardening tools and stop by to lend a hand or come say hello. This project is being funded by American Library Association’s Resilient Communities program, The Friends of Westhampton Library, and Gardener’s Supply Company. All herbs and compost will be sourced locally by Intervale Farm and

Bridgmont Farm respectively.

The Spring Adult/Teen Craft has two kits available including colorful branches and accordion butterflies. To request a kit, contact mschwelm@cwmares.org.

Join Mary for outdoor play with large scale toys like hula hoops and steppingstones. Connect with other families safely and beat the social isolation on Tuesdays from 3 to 4:30 p.m. Playgroup will be canceled in the case of inclement weather.

Youth Service Librarian Emily Wayne hosts online story time on Wednesdays at 10:30 a.m. Contact ewayne@cwmares.org for Zoom login information and beat social isolation with other families.

The library has curbside only pick-up on Monday and Thursday from 2 to 8 p.m. Seniors will have browsing hours on Tuesday from 9 a.m. to noon with browsing for all open from 1 to 5 p.m.

Browsing for all will be available on Wednesday from 1 to 5 p.m. and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 12:45 p.m.

No appointment is necessary for in-person browsing. For more information, visit the Westhampton Public Library page on westhampton-ma.com or contact 413-527-5386.

Deadline to register for June 5 election is June 1

WESTHAMPTON — Early vote by mail applications for the June 5 Town Election must be received no later than 5 p.m. on Tuesday, June 1. It is recommended applications be submitted by Wednesday, May 26.

An application is available on the town website, westhampton-ma.com. Applications and ballots can be returned to Town Clerk, Westhampton Town

Hall, 1 South Road, Westhampton, MA 01027.

Ballots must be sealed in the provided tan envelope. The envelope must be signed by the voter along with printed name and address as registered to vote. Voters are required to return their ballots in the white pre-addressed envelope provided with the ballot, or in person, or into the designated official bal-

lot drop box located at the base of the stairs to the Town Hall. Be sure to insert ballot fully and check that it dropped into the box. The Tax Collector payment lock box in front of the town hall is not an official designated drop box for the deposit of ballots. Ballots dropped in there or any location other than the official ballot drop box or in person are done so at voter’s risk.

Once an early or absentee vote by mail ballot is marked as returned and accepted in the Voter Registry System, the voter cannot request another ballot or change their vote.

For a copy of the election warrant, visit Westhampton-ma.com. For more information, contact the clerk’s office at 413-203-3080 or clerk@westhampton-ma.org.

Submissions are always welcome.

Send us your engagement, wedding, baby, anniversary and graduation news and photos.

Country Journal
24 Water Street, Palmer, MA 01069
email: countryjournal@turley.com

CUMMINGTON

Friday Night Café returns outdoors Friday, June 11

CUMMINGTON — The Friday Night Café is excited to announce it is returning in person at the pavilion in Pettingill memorial Park for a series of six outdoor performances this summer beginning in June.

Performances will be from 6:30 to 8 p.m. on the second and fourth Fridays of June, July, and August, beginning on June 11 with Josh Wachtel and friends, featuring special guest Norma Jean Hayes. It is guaranteed to be fun, eclectic, and celebratory. Live Music is back at the Cafe!

COVID-19 state regulations in place at the time of the show will be followed; if it is damp or threatening rain the Café will gather under the pavilion; if it is heavy rain, it will be cancelled; if it is a beautiful summer evening, it may be set up on the lawn; guests must bring their own chairs, blankets, snacks, and drinks, but no alcohol is allowed; guests should be prepared for bugs.

It will be the first live performance since the beginning of the pandemic. During this time, the Friday Night Café adopted a “Lo-Fi” approach as many performers have gone the route of live streaming their performances, or making videos, during COVID-19, and posting them on the New Rural Advocate website.


Once again, this is brought to the community by the friendly folks at the Village Church who believe that music can be a powerful force for building community.

NEED HELP WITH YOUR HOUSING REPAIRS?

Hilltown CDC received funding for the FY20 Housing Rehab Program for the towns of **Chesterfield, Cummington, Goshen, Peru, Plainfield, Williamsburg and Worthington**, and we’re currently applying for the FY21 grant that may include the following communities: *Chesterfield, Cummington, Goshen, Peru, Plainfield, Westhampton, Williamsburg, and Worthington.* Homeowners who live in these towns are encouraged to apply now if you need help with your housing repairs.

Listed below is the work that can be performed under the Housing Rehab Program:

Siding
Roofs and Chimneys
Windows and Doors
Floor Joists, Flooring
Insulation, Walls, Ceilings
Handicap Accessibility Work



Septic Systems and Sewer Tie-in's
Plumbing and Electrical Updates
Wells, Pumps, and Hot Water Tanks
Porches, Decks, and Stairs
Lead Paint Removal
Asbestos Removal

These are NO Interest/NO payment loans which may be entirely forgiven, and all work is completed by a licensed contractor of your choice.

Please don't delay, funding is available, and you may be surprised to find out you qualify!

Please contact Paula Bilodeau, Program Manager, at (413) 296-4536, ext. 123 or email paulab@hilltowncdc.org. for an application.

| HOUSEHOLD INCOME GUIDELINES/LIMITS: | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Household Size | Maximum Gross Annual Income |
| 1 | \$47,850 |
| 2 | \$54,650 |
| 3 | \$61,500 |
| 4 | \$68,300 |
| 5 | \$73,800 |
| 6 | \$79,250 |
| 7 | \$84,700 |

Funding is provided by the US Dept. of HUD/DHCD and MA CDBG Programs.

GENERAL CONTRACTORS

Are you are interested in steady, local work?

Hilltown CDC is currently seeking General Contractors who are interested in bidding on Housing Rehabilitation projects funded by the Community Development Block Grant. We recently received funding for the FY20 Housing Rehab Program with an anticipated 18 projects. In addition, we're in the process of applying for the FY21 grant for another anticipated 18 projects.

Projects are planned in the towns of Chesterfield, Cummington, Goshen, Peru, Plainfield, Westhampton, Williamsburg, and Worthington with an average project cost of \$35,000.00 - \$40,000.00. Contractors working on Housing Rehab projects are guaranteed payment for all work with a quick turnaround on invoices as well as a steady source of local, year around work.

GC's must possess a valid Contractor Supervisor's License and a Home Improvement Contractor's License. Lead certification is preferred, but not required. General Liability coverage as well as Workmen's Compensation insurance (if applicable) is required.

HCDC is an EEO/Section 3 Employer. Women & minorities are encouraged to apply.

Please contact Paula Bilodeau, Program Manager, at (413) 296-4536, ext. 123 for an application or email paulab@hilltowncdc.org.

Funding is provided by the US Dept. of HUD/DHCD and MA CDBG Programs.



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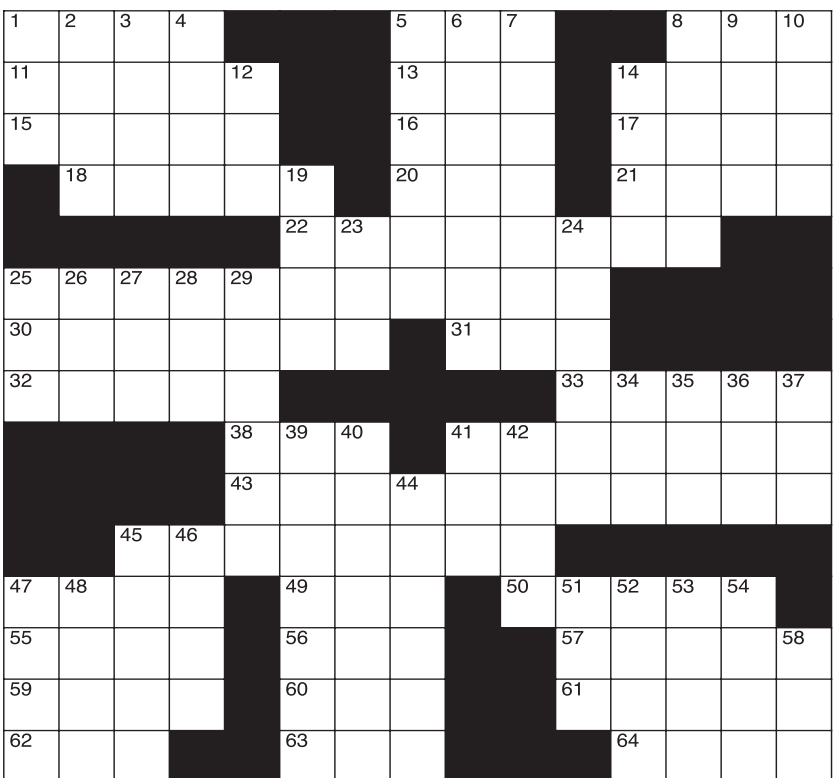
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CLUES ACROSS

1. Prevents harm to young
5. "Losing My Religion" rockers
8. Partner to pan
11. Cavalry unit
13. Peyton's little brother
14. Mexican dish
15. Disseminates info to the public
16. Set an animal on
17. Canadian flyers
18. Elongated mouths of anthropods
20. I (German)
21. Opposite of west
22. Glows
25. Measures how quickly a car moves
30. One who has gained wealth
31. Patti Hearst's captors
32. Extensive landed

property
33. Male aristocrat
38. For each
41. More fidgety
43. Very happy
45. A place to store info
47. Helps to heal
49. 12th month (abbr.)
50. Broad, shallow craters
55. Nocturnal S. American rodent
56. Frost
57. Ethiopian town
59. Curved shapes
60. Company that rings receipts
61. Spiritual leader
62. Sheep native to Sweden
63. Cars need it
64. Partner to relaxation

CLUES DOWN

1. Scientist's high-reso-

lution tool (abbr.)
2. Type of school
3. Formal close (music)
4. Transmits high voltage
5. A way to occupy a certain area
6. Draws out
7. His Airness
8. Nocturnal rodents
9. South American plants
10. Homestead
12. Bland or semiliquid food
14. Forest resident
19. The body needs it
23. Atomic mass unit (abbr.)
24. Spell
25. Relaxing place
26. Political fundraising tool
27. Make a mistake
28. Partner to Adam

29. Tyrant
34. Unit of electrical resistance
35. A history of one's life
37. Sea eagle
39. Avoiding being caught
40. __ de Mornay, actress
41. Belonging to a thing
42. Not us
44. Motorcars
45. Capital of Bangladesh
46. Ancient Greek sophist
47. Practice boxing
48. __ Grant, actor
51. Swiss river
52. S. Sudan river
53. A bumpkin
54. One point south of southwest
58. Small island (British)

THIS WEEK'S HOROSCOPES

ARIES

Mar 21/Apr 20

Aries, altruism is a noble trait, but remember to also devote some time to your own interests. There is a way to find a balance between all of your actions.

CANCER

Jun 22/Jul 22

It is easy to miss the forest for the trees, Cancer. Making decisions based on one detail will not do you justice. You have to look at the bigger picture before making a decision.

LIBRA

Sept 23/Oct 23

It may seem productive to look at the world through rose-colored glasses, Libra. However, repeatedly guarding others from anything unpleasant can be a disservice.

CAPRICORN

Dec 22/Jan 20

Capricorn, it is time to start looking for new hobbies to pass the time, especially if you've been spending a lot of time at home. You could transition into a new career.

TAURUS

Apr 21/May 21

Travel plans may be on your mind, Taurus. Weigh all of the pros and cons of traveling before purchasing your plane ticket or booking that hotel.

LEO

Jul 23/Aug 23

After a few amendments to your plan, you will have some good options to go on. Scorpio can give a look as well and offer some advice on how to proceed this week.

GEMINI

May 22/Jun 21

Gemini, when opportunities spring up sometime this week, you may need to grab that golden ring quickly or it is bound to pass you by in a flash. Then regrets may sink in.

VIRGO

Aug 24/Sept 22

If each day seems like a mental marathon, then you definitely need to find some "me" time to unwind and disconnect. Schedule time each day to devote to yourself.

SAGITTARIUS

Nov 23/Dec 21

Health news may bring a scare, Sagittarius. If anyone can whittle down the facts and get on a solid course, it is you. You'll get through this challenge.

AQUARIUS

Jan 21/Feb 18

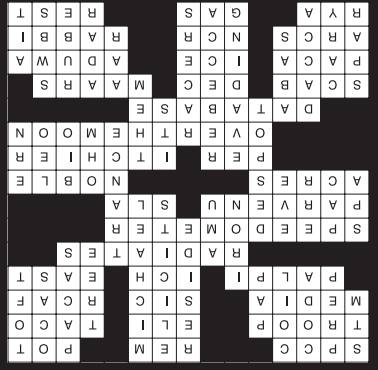
Big changes are in store for you this week, Aquarius. You could get the news that you have been waiting for. This may mean you will have to quickly rise to action.

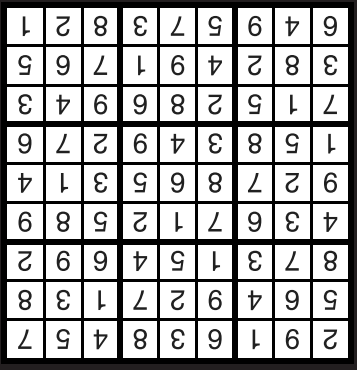
PISCES

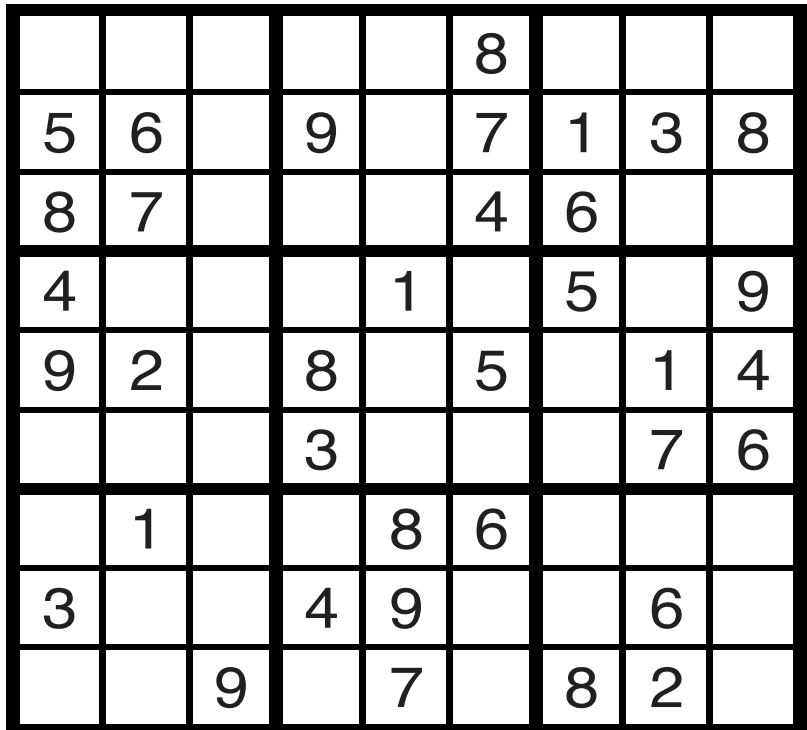
Feb 19/Mar 20

Pisces, while others are taking in the scenery this week, you are getting down to business. This can set you on a productive path.

answers







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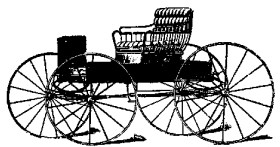
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| 31 | Base Price \$15.00 | 32 | Base Price \$15.50 |
| 33 | Base Price \$16.00 | 34 | Base Price \$16.50 |
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